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Synopses of Important Articles.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE ACTS OF PAUL. By W. MUSS-ARNOLT, in *The Independent*, January 6 and 13, 1898.

AN important discovery by the great Coptic scholar, Carl Schmidt, was made a few months ago. It is announced by him in the *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, VII, 117-24; the subject of a special communication to the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1897, No. 24, cols. 625-9, by Professor Adolf Harnack, and of an article by Theodor Zahn in the December issue of the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 933-40. It is nothing less than the discovery of the Acts of Paul, in a Coptic version; a most welcome addition to the many finds of the last five years, *e. g.*, the apocryphal gospel and apocalypse (see, however, Zahn, p. 933) of Peter; Mrs. Lewis' discovery of the early Syriac gospel translation; Robinson and James' edition of a considerable fragment of the old Acts of John, throwing new light on the time and conditions of the sixth decade of the second century; and last, the new Logia of Jesus. Thus four of the five writings placed by Eusebius immediately after the New Testament, *i. e.*, the Shepherd, Epistle of Barnabas, Teaching of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse of Peter, are known to us now in their original Greek, either wholly or at least enough to present a fair picture of the whole. And now we shall know also the contents of the fifth writing, so closely related with New Testament documents that in early times it was, as a rule, copied along with them.

The contents of the papyrus, now belonging to the Heidelberg University Library, are principally: (1) the Acts of Paul and Thecla; (2) the spurious correspondence between Paul and the church at Corinth; (3) the *Martyrium Pauli*, of which the Greek text is published by M. A. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, Pars prior, pp. 104-17 (Lipsiæ, 1891). The last leaf of the manuscript is preserved, containing the final words of the *Martyrium*, followed by the subscription, unfortunately not intact, giving, in Coptic, as the title of the whole work, what corresponds to the Greek *Πράξεις Παύλου*, the Acts of Paul.

The fragments, as far as can be made out, describe events of Paul's life in Antioch, Iconium, Corinth, Philippi, and Rome. The author appears to emphasize especially distinguished female converts and companions of Paul (Thecla, Stratonice, Eubule, Artemilla, etc.). Its contents appear to settle for good several mooted points.

1. The Greek *Martyrium* of Paul agrees with the end of the new Coptic text (so Harnack, 626, and Zahn). The Greek text now begins most abruptly, and proves to have been taken out of the larger work to serve as a "lesson" for the apostle's memorial day.

2. Zahn's view that the apocryphal correspondence between Paul and the church at Corinth was originally a part of the Acts of Paul is confirmed. This correspondence was incorporated into the New Testament of the Syriac church in the fourth century. What remains yet to be established is the hypothesis of Vetter that the Syriac translator added to the letter of Paul a large section of his own fabrication, in order to refute the Bardesanian heresy.

3. The most interesting information gathered from this new text is the fact, never thought of before, that the Acts of Paul and Thecla is a part of the larger Acts of Paul. The Acts of Thecla were detached from the larger Acts of Paul to serve as a "lesson" for the saint's day. The points of contact between the two "Acts" are now easily explained from the identity of their author. Harnack called attention to the remarkable parallels between the Acts of Thecla and the correspondence of Paul and the church at Corinth. This is now also easily understood, both being portions of one and the same larger work. It cannot yet be explained how Jerome was led to believe that the Asiatic presbyter, the reputed author of the Acts of Paul and Thecla, was convicted of their authorship before the apostle John, and deprived of his office. The author, to be sure, did not intentionally commit this fraud as such. His love and admiration for Paul led him to write this fantastic novel; and yet, how many centuries, says Harnack, has the church held this work in highest esteem!—a fact that again speaks very unfavorably for the sound judgment and sagacity of church Fathers and mediæval theologians.

Harnack believes that the whole Acts of Paul were written about the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Among the many questions of great interest, which we hope may be settled when the text of the Acts of Paul is published, is, for instance, James' suggestion that features of the later Acts of Xantippe and Polyxena were borrowed from the earlier work; that the excerpt of a speech of Paul at Athens preserved

in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury (1156 A. D.) is an extract of the Acts of Paul.

Another important question awaiting an answer is the relation of the *Actus Petri cum Simone*, with their long introduction, dealing with Paul, to the Acts of Paul, especially if, as Harnack believes, they are not heretical (Gnostic), but are closely related to the Acts of Paul in style and character.

These papers furnish an admirable summary of this important matter, and are of value to all students of the New Testament. The subject is of special interest in the light of recent discussions as to Acts.

S. M.

THE THEOLOGY OF ALBRECHT RITSCHL.—(1) The fundamental conception of Ritschl's theology is not anti-philosophical, but anti-metaphysical. We cannot know things in themselves. The criterion of religious truths is ethical—a judgment as to their value to us. (2) In his doctrine of Scripture Ritschl rejects traditional views of inspiration, substitutes no others, and regards the whole matter as a hindrance to theology. The significance of the Old Testament lies in its preparation for the New, which itself must be used critically. The aim of criticism is a valid knowledge of Christianity, and the construction of the system of Christian truth. The real teaching of Jesus lies in the testimony of his disciples, expressed before the influx of philosophy. As to Jesus himself, Ritschl holds that his oneness with the Father was in disposition, in will, in aim. His aim was to establish the kingdom of God, and the practical aspect of his life is the essential one, viz., his activity. In one respect alone is Jesus unapproachable—in the founding of the kingdom of God, in which he and the Father were one. His death is not the center of his work, and is, indeed, almost incidental. He had no actual preëxistence except in the love of God. Ritschl's entire Christology is dominated by his theory of value-judgments. The supreme consideration is what Christ is to us, his value to our hearts and lives. God is love, in that he trains men for membership in the kingdom of God, in which they are to reach a supernatural destiny. Conversion is a continuous process. The kingdom of God is of the first importance to Ritschl. The believer can have communion with Christ only through the congregation of believers. But the kingdom is more than the church in that it is the entire sphere of Christian action, while the church is an institution. None of these positions is quite satisfactory, and the entire system

rests upon a questionable philosophy.—J. H. W. STUCKENBERG, in the *American Journal of Theology*, April, 1898, pp. 268–92.

THE INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES.—It is the purpose of this paper to make a classification of parables that will give exegetical criteria and then to derive rules for parabolic exegesis. It is based wholly on a study of the interpretation given by Jesus himself to his parables. As regards their pedagogical purpose and method, parables as used by Jesus are of two sorts: those setting forth the nature and the progress of the kingdom of God (as in Matt., chap. 13), *i. e.*, a complex truth; and the homiletic, *i. e.*, those setting forth a single truth or duty (as Luke 10: 25–37). In the case of the former Jesus interprets details, but only such as *are essential to the parable as a story*; in the case of the latter he ignores them and applies only the “point.” As rules for interpretation one should (1) discover whether the parable belongs to the first or second class; (2) in the former case (*a*) discover the central point of the parable as a story and its indispensable elements, (*b*) so interpret these (and these only) as to make them stand for teachings subordinate to the composite truth corresponding to the dominant analogy. (3) In case of a parable having to do with a single truth or duty, discover its “point” and use it and it alone.—SHAILER MATHEWS, in the *American Journal of Theology*, April, 1898, pp. 293–311.

THE CHURCH AS THE FULFILMENT OF THE CHRIST (Eph. 1: 23).—The precise meaning of *πλήρωμα* has been a subject of much controversy. The first point to be settled is the force of words ending in *μα*. This is not according to the traditional rule, that of a passive sense, but rather “the result of the agency of the corresponding verb.” By a study of usage it will appear that “fulness” is a “fulness in exchange for emptiness.” Therefore Paul in the present passage declares that in some mysterious sense the church is that without which Christ is not complete, but with which he is complete. In support of this somewhat startling view, appeal can be made to (1) the metaphor of the body which leads up to the present verse; (2) the incompleteness of his metaphor to express Paul’s constant thought as to the union of the church and Christ; for as the church grows toward completion, the Christ also grows toward completion; (3) Col. 1: 24; (4) the next words to those in question, where Christ is spoken of as the one who is being fulfilled.—J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, in the *Expositor*, April, 1898.

DAS EIGENTUM NACH CHRISTLICHER BEURTEILUNG.—The real position of Christianity as to property, viz., that it must be at the service of love, cannot be reduced to law. Every period may have peculiar needs, and to reduce the matter to legislation would be to put fetters upon Christian instincts. Laws must, however, be so framed that Christian love can have the freest expression. The following principles are seen: (1) private property must be recognized; (2) duties must be recognized in economic matters—in the production, the protection, and the use of private property; (3) all classifications of the nature of property must be aided that look toward the recognition of the social nature and reciprocal duties of human life. Special laws and applications must be left to the awakened Christian conscience in its relations to the constantly changing circumstances of life. No single law can ever express this. The great duty of the church is to plant and cherish the Christian instinct and feeling of love. This love will express itself in the spontaneous fulfilling of the duties as regards property.—H. H. WENDT, in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, March, 1898.

THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER OF THE HEBREW SABBATH.—To put the contrast concisely between the Sabbath in its original form and the fully developed post-exilic institution, we might say that the old Sabbath was merely a *šabbāthôn*—a day of propitiation and pacification, marked by rites of an atonement character—one *šabbāthôn* among many others. It was identical in character and spirit with the Babylonian *ûm nûh libbi* or *šabattum*, conveying the idea of “propitiation,” “cessation” of the divine anger, pacification of the gods, and cognate ideas. The developed institution of the Hebrew Sabbath was unique in its character, with rest from all kinds of work as its central idea, a day sacred to Yahweh who had created the world in six days and who had himself set the example for all times by resting on the seventh day. These two features—(a) a day of absolute rest and (b) the doctrine upon which this ordinance is based—represent the distinctively Jewish contribution to the Babylonian-Hebraic *šabattum*. Between the old *šabbāthôn* and the new *Šabbāth*, however, there lies the growth of the Hebrew people from a semi-primitive condition of religious thought to the advanced belief which controls and dominates the entire pentateuchal legislation in its final—its present—shape.—MORRIS JASTROW, JR., in the *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 312–52.